



US006509806B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Andrews

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,509,806 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Jan. 21, 2003**

(54) **ADJUSTING UNTRIMMED VCO DURING OPERATION OF THE OSCILLATOR**

(75) Inventor: **Joseph Andrews, San Marcos, CA (US)**

(73) Assignee: **Denso Corporation, Kariya (JP)**

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/887,227**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 20, 2001**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2001/0035796 A1 Nov. 1, 2001

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 09/484,474, filed on Jan. 18, 2000.

(51) **Int. Cl.**⁷ **H03B 5/20**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **331/117 R; 331/117 FE; 331/108 R**

(58) **Field of Search** **331/107 R, 108 R, 331/109, 117 R, 117 FE, 110, 111**

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,185,247 A	*	1/1980	Harrison, Jr.	327/107
4,646,035 A	*	2/1987	Chapelle	331/177 R
4,746,879 A	*	5/1988	Ma et al.	331/44
4,943,786 A	*	7/1990	Cordwell et al.	331/1 A
5,570,066 A	*	10/1996	Eberhardt et al.	331/34
5,689,820 A	*	11/1997	Nahear et al.	455/86
5,701,600 A	*	12/1997	Wetters et al.	455/208
5,748,047 A	*	5/1998	Gurthrie et al.	331/19
5,892,408 A	*	4/1999	Binder	331/44
5,912,595 A	*	6/1999	Ma et al.	331/117 D

* cited by examiner

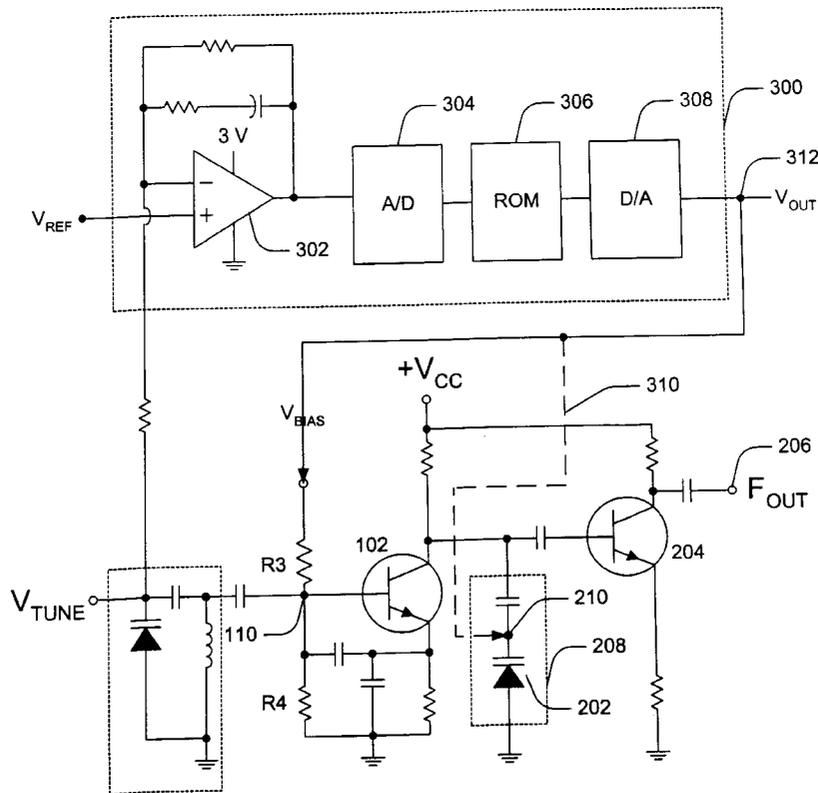
Primary Examiner—Tuan T. Lam

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Harness, Dickey & Pierce, PLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A frequency oscillator tuning process at the manufacturing stage is replaced with an adjustment of a resonant circuit in the frequency oscillator during an operation of the oscillator. The adjustment utilizes a crystal oscillator, a frequency oscillator such as a voltage-controlled oscillator (VCO), and a trimmer in a phase-locked loop configuration to determine a correction voltage required for an untrimmed VCO to operate at a nominally specified frequency by adjusting an input tuning voltage for a resonant circuit.

2 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



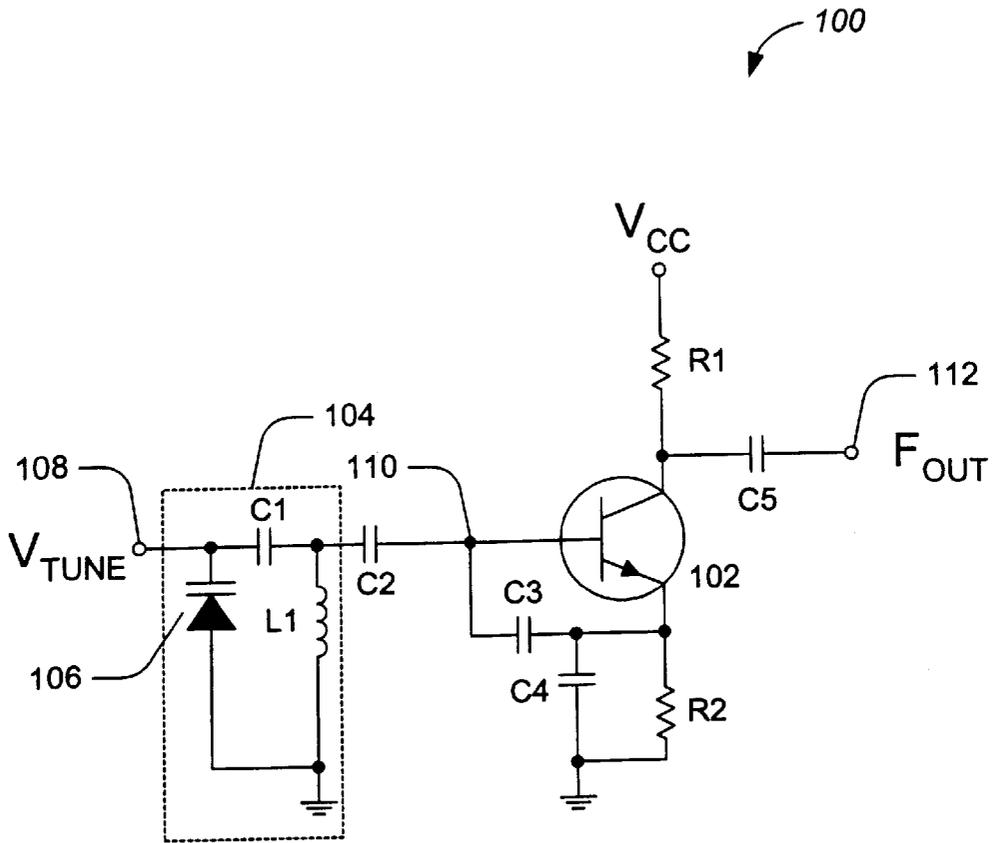


FIG. 1

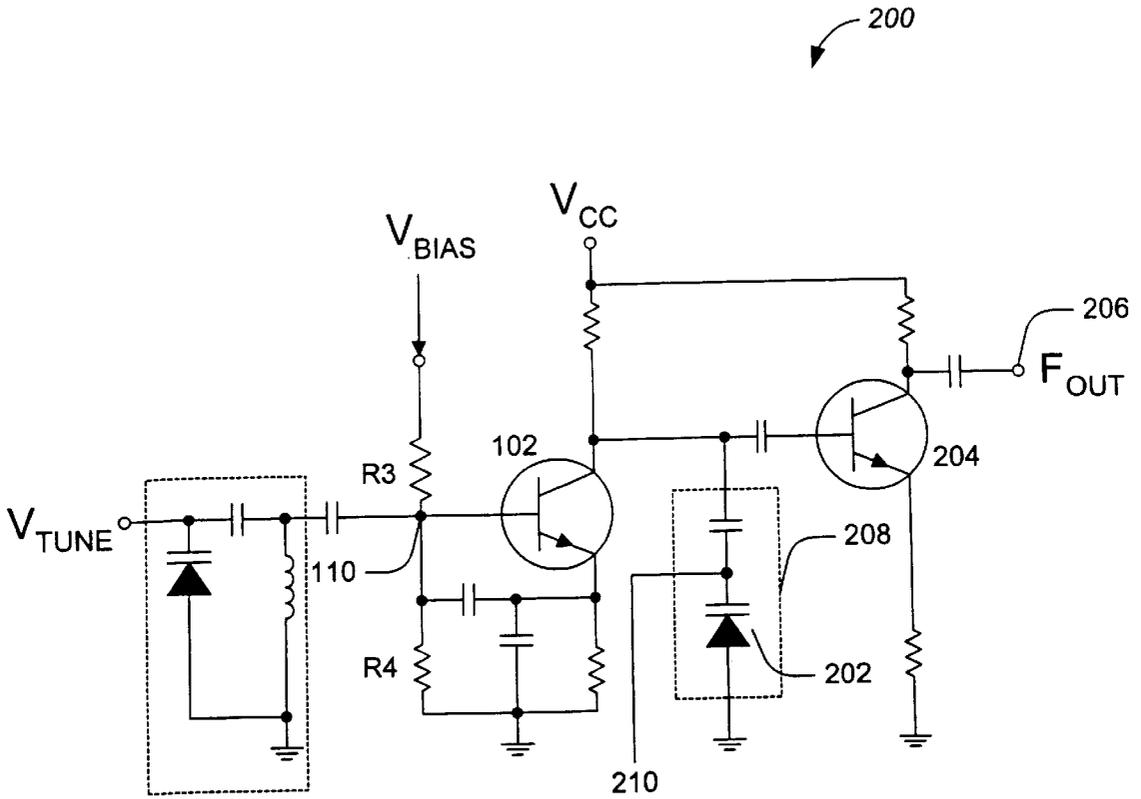


FIG. 2

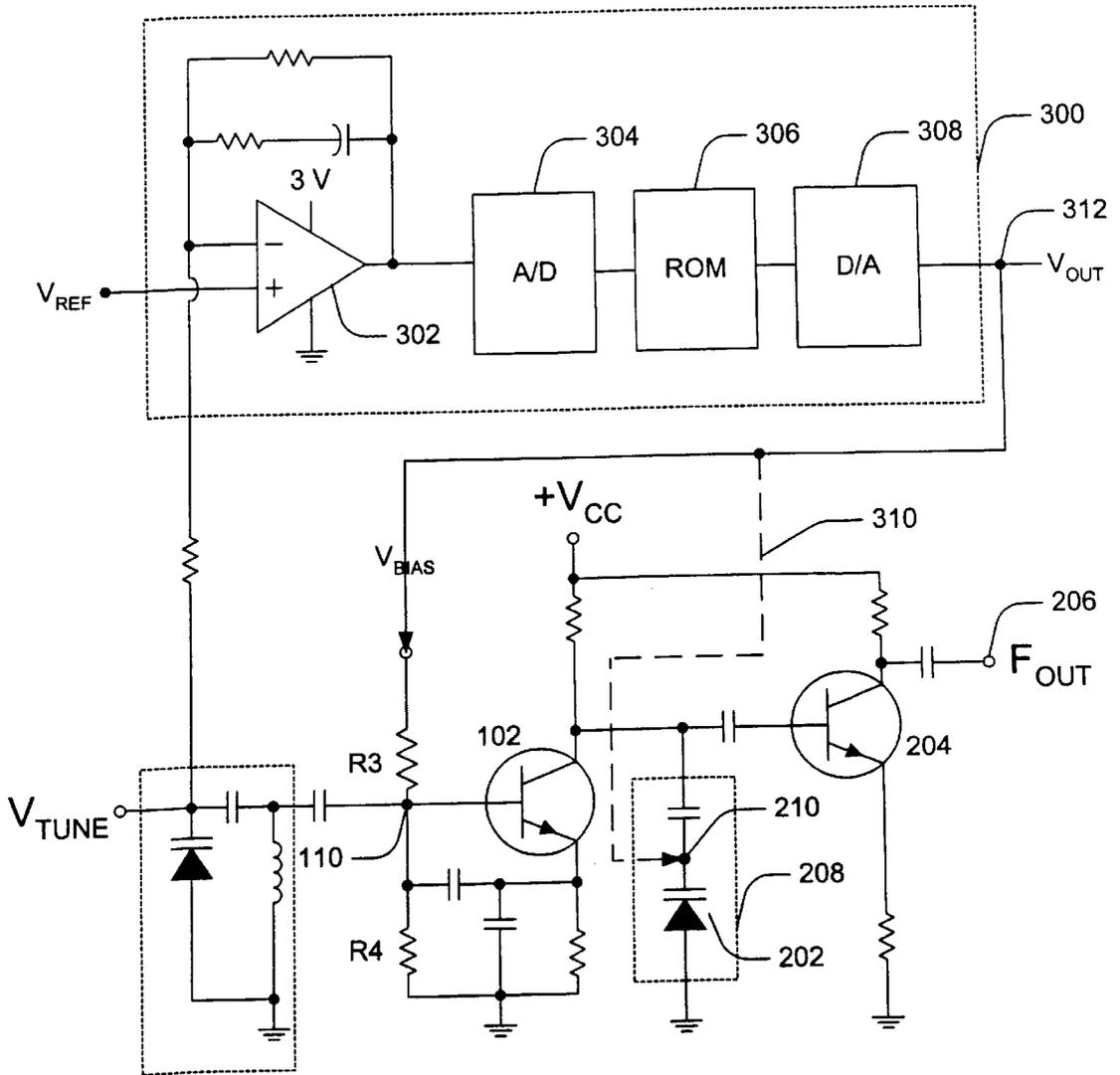


FIG. 3

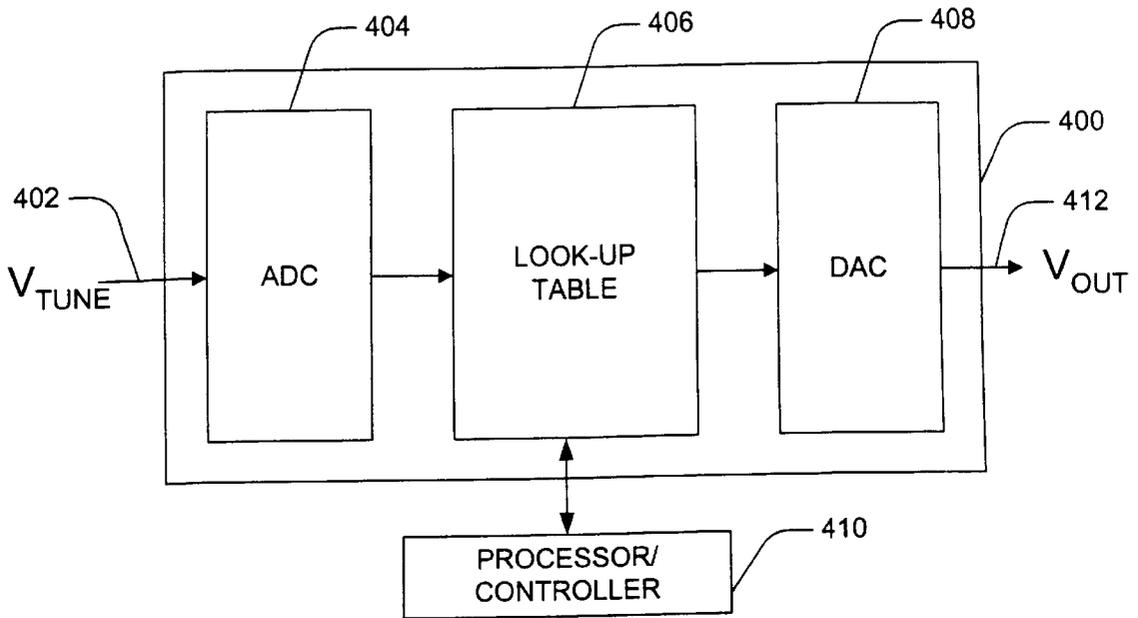


FIG. 4

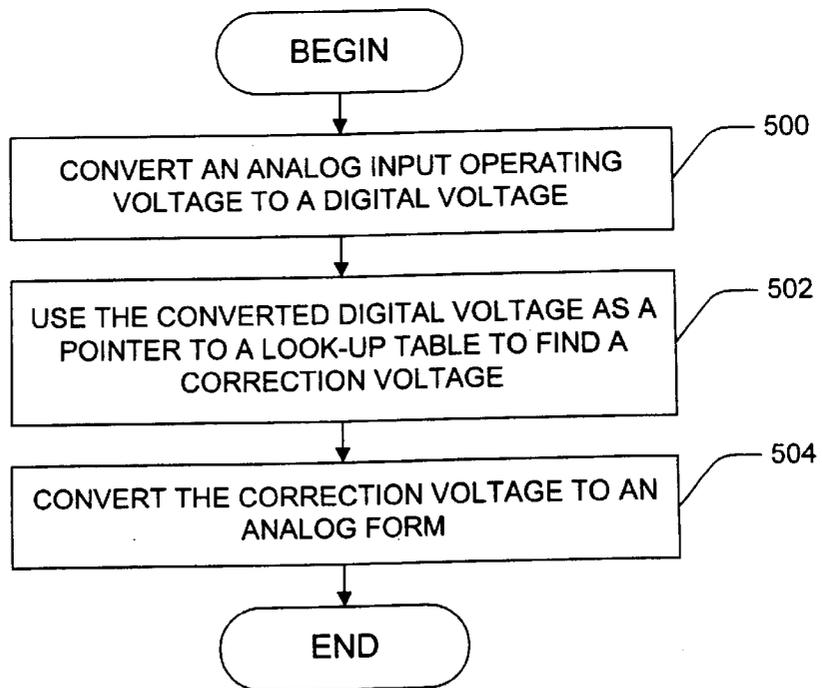


FIG. 5

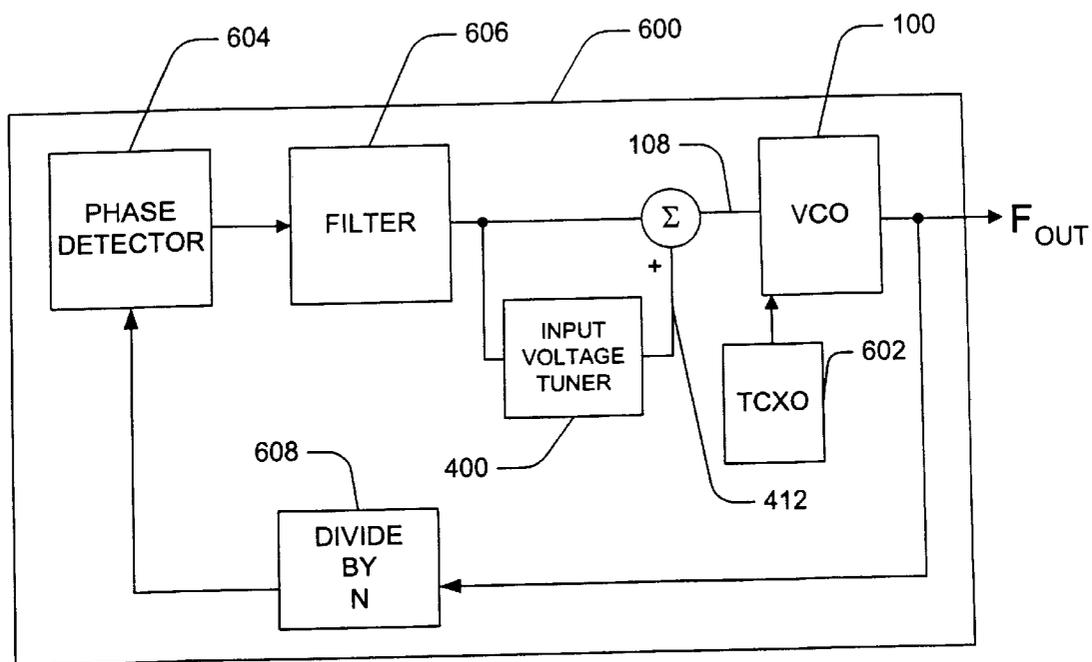


FIG. 6

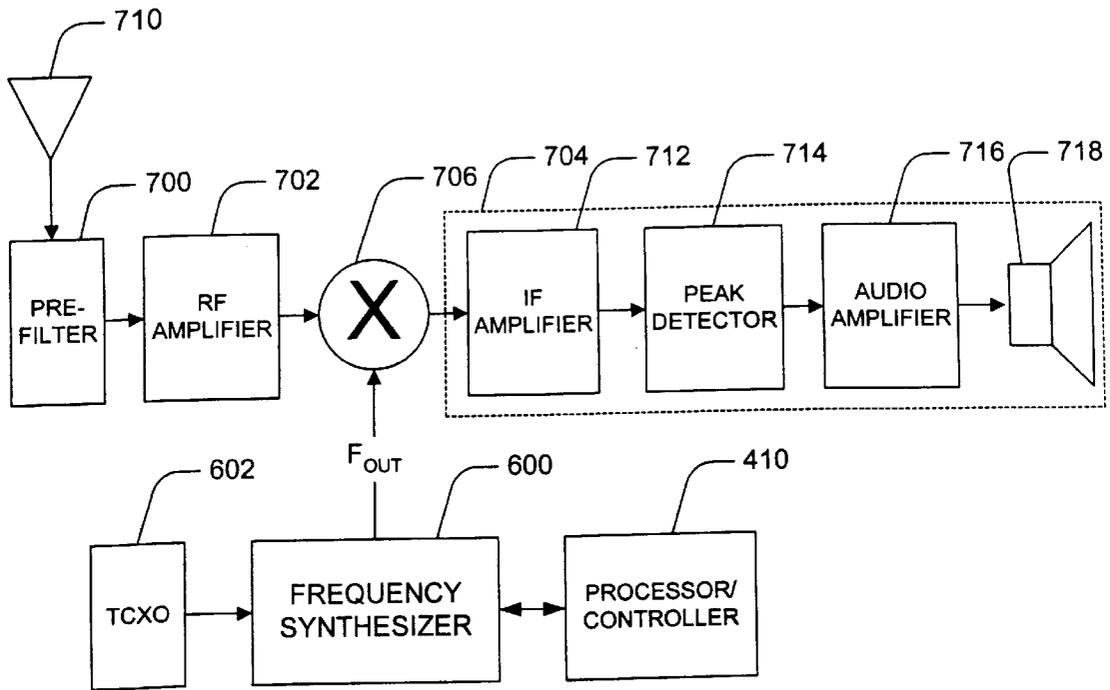


FIG. 7

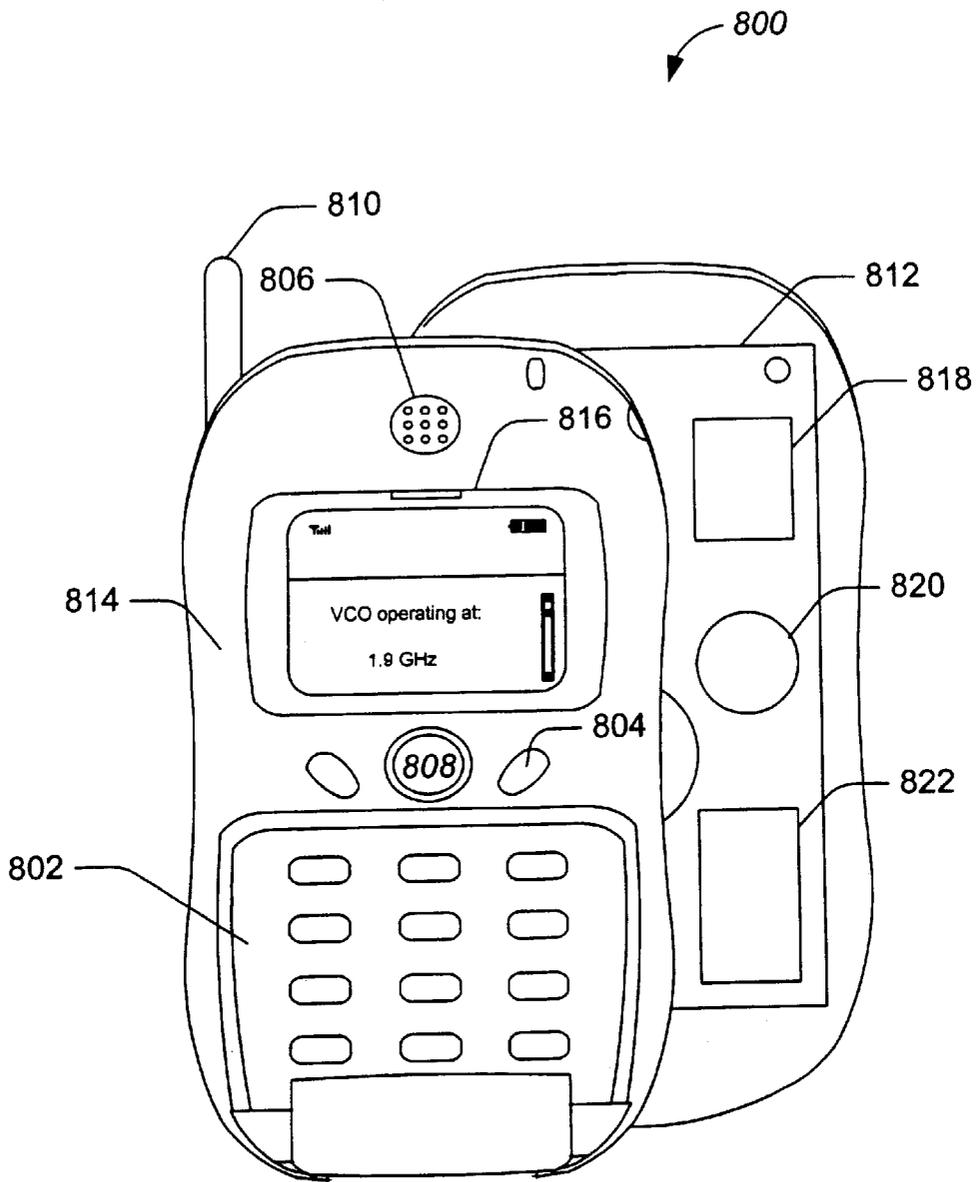


FIG. 8

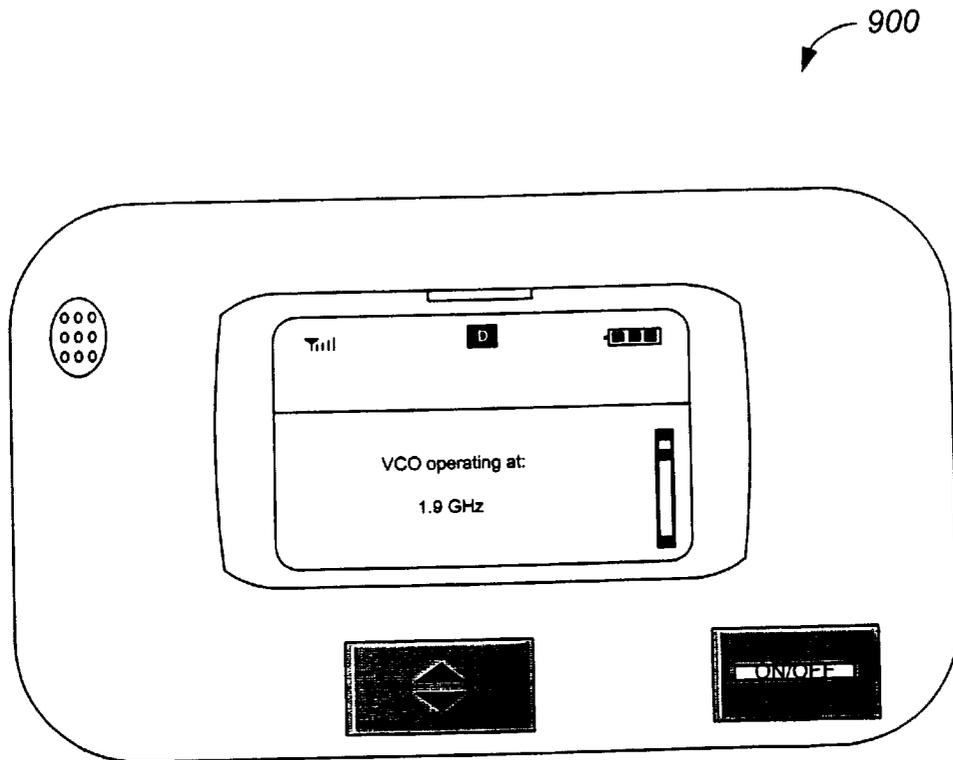


FIG. 9

ADJUSTING UNTRIMMED VCO DURING OPERATION OF THE OSCILLATOR

This is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/484,474, filed Jan. 18, 2000 (pending).

BACKGROUND

This invention relates to voltage-controlled oscillators.

A frequency oscillator, such as a voltage-controlled oscillator (VCO), is an important component in telecommunication and other devices. The VCO is used as a local oscillator for up/down converters in radio systems, and as a modem oscillator in virtually all wireless and cellular systems.

The VCO is often manually adjusted during manufacturing to trim the center frequency of the resonator. However, this trimming or tuning process occupies a significant portion of the cost of a VCO. Therefore, it is advantageous to design a system in which the tuning process during manufacturing can be eliminated.

SUMMARY

A frequency oscillator tuning process at the manufacturing stage is replaced with an adjustment of a resonant circuit in the frequency oscillator during the operation of the oscillator.

The technique utilizes a crystal oscillator, a frequency oscillator such as a voltage-controlled oscillator (VCO), and a trimmer in a phase-locked loop configuration to determine a correction voltage required for an untrimmed VCO to operate at a nominally specified frequency by adjusting an input tuning voltage for a resonant circuit.

The trimmer for adjusting an operating frequency of the VCO includes a storage element having a set of calibrated data corresponding to a set of input signals. The trimmer also includes a controller configured to utilize the set of calibrated data to provide an appropriate tuning signal for tuning the VCO to a nominally specified output frequency. In some embodiments, the trimmer involves searching a lookup table for a calibrated data corresponding to an input signal.

The frequency oscillator having the trimmer further includes

a resonant circuit configured to receive the tuning signal from the trimmer and generate a wave energy signal of a particular frequency corresponding to the tuning signal, such that the particular frequency is substantially close to a nominally specified output frequency of the oscillator.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Different aspects of the disclosure will be described in reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram a frequency oscillator such as a voltage-controlled oscillator;

FIG. 2 is another schematic diagram of a frequency oscillator;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an input voltage tuner;

FIG. 4 is another diagram of an input voltage tuner;

FIG. 5 is a flow diagram of an oscillator tuning process;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of a frequency synthesizer;

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a communication device;

FIG. 8 shows an exploded view of a cellular telephone system; and

FIG. 9 is a front view of a paging device.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

One embodiment of a frequency oscillator **100**, such as a voltage-controlled oscillator (VCO), is shown in FIG. 1. The output frequency of the VCO **100** is controlled by the impedance at the base **110** of the transistor presented by a resonant circuit **104**. The VCO **100** includes a transistor **102** and an inductive resonant circuit **104** coupled with a respective variable reactance element **106**, such as a voltage variable capacitor or varactor, which is responsive to a tuning signal **108**, V_{TUNE} . The tuning signal **108** tunes the resonant circuit **104** within its operable predetermined frequency band. The tuning signal **108** normally tunes the resonant circuit **104** during manufacture to a nominally specified output frequency at a specified control voltage.

In particular, the base **110** of the transistor **102** is AC coupled to the resonant circuit **104** through a DC blocking capacitor **C2**. The resonant circuit **104** contains an LC circuit which resonates at a desired resonant frequency. The LC circuit forms an equivalent LC network with a capacitor **C1** and an inductor **L1**. The resonant circuit **104** also includes a voltage variable reactance element **106** such as a varactor or variable diode **106**. During the operation of the oscillator, the resonant circuit **104** is tuned to selected frequency channels within the operable frequency band. The varactor **106** is adjusted by a tuning signal **108** coupled to the varactor **106**. As the tuning signal **108** is varied, the varactor **106** changes its capacitance and the resonant circuit **104** changes its operating frequency.

A feedback capacitor **C3** is connected across the base and emitter of the transistor **102**. Another feedback capacitor **C4** is connected from the emitter connection to the ground. Resistors **R1** and **R2** are used as all-frequency chokes for the supply voltage V_p that bias the transistor **102**. The collector of the transistor **102** is AC-coupled to the RF output **112** through a DC blocking capacitor **C5**.

FIG. 2 shows an alternative embodiment of the frequency oscillator circuit **200** in which a fine tuning of the desired frequency is achieved by methods known as a frequency "pushing" and a frequency "pulling." The frequency pushing involves adjusting or altering the bias voltage of the oscillator at the base **110** of the transistor **102**. The frequency pulling involves adjusting an output load **208** of the VCO circuit through a node **210**.

The frequency pushing measures the sensitivity of the oscillator output frequency **206** to the bias voltage applied at the base **110** of the transistor **102** and is expressed in MHz/volt. The output frequency change corresponds to a given change in the bias voltage.

The frequency pulling measures the frequency change due to a non-ideal load. It is measured by noting the frequency change caused by a load **208** having an arbitrary return loss with all possible phases. The load **208** can be adjusted with a variable capacitor or varactor **202**. An additional transistor **204** is configured to amplify the "frequency pulled" RF signal.

One embodiment of an input voltage tuner **300** for a VCO **200** is shown in FIG. 3. The tuner **300** performs self-trimming by setting an input reference voltage and enabling the op-amp **302** to push the VCO frequency. Initially, a phase-locked loop frequency synthesizer is set to a mid-range frequency. The op-amp **302** then appropriately pushes the VCO frequency to obtain the correct frequency with a tuning voltage of approximately 1.5 volts. This voltage is converted to a digital form by an analog-to-digital (A/D) converter **304** and stored in read-only memory (ROM) **306**.

Finally, a digital-to-analog (D/A) converter **308** converts the stored value into an analog form. This analog voltage provides a constant voltage compensating offset.

An alternative embodiment of the tuner **300** is shown in a dashed line **310**. This embodiment performs the digital trimming by frequency pulling. First, the PLL is adjusted to a mid-range frequency. The ROM is then fine tuned to achieve the correct voltage at the varactor node **210**. The voltage at the node **210** is set by pulling the VCO frequency. The adjusted voltage is set for a constant voltage offset.

FIG. 4 shows a further embodiment of an input voltage tuner **400** using existing components to determine a correction voltage required for an untrimmed VCO to operate at a nominally specified frequency. The components are either unused spares or shared memory spaces.

FIG. 5 shows a flow diagram of an oscillator tuning process using the input voltage tuner of FIG. 4. As diagrammed in FIGS. 4 and 5, an analog input operating voltage **402** is converted to a digital voltage by an analog-to-digital converter (ADC) **404** (step **500**). The digital voltage is used as a pointer to a look-up table **406** in a memory such as a flash memory. Cellular phones often use flash memories because they are non-volatile and therefore retain information even when their power supply is removed. A processor/controller **410** then directs the look-up table **406** to provide a digital correction voltage corresponding to the converted digital voltage at step **502**. Finally, the correction voltage is converted back to an analog form by a digital-to-analog converter (DAC) **408** to be used as a tuned control voltage **412** (step **504**). This voltage **412** is used by the VCO to tune its resonant circuit **104** (FIGS. 1-3) or the adjustable output load **208** (FIGS. 2-3).

A frequency synthesizer, such as a phase-locked loop, is often used as an up/down converter in communication devices to provide a local oscillator signal. A block diagram of a frequency synthesizer **600** is shown in FIG. 6. The synthesizer **600** includes a reference oscillator such as a temperature-controlled crystal oscillator (TCXO) **6C2**, a frequency divider **608**, a phase detector **604**, and a loop filter **606**. The synthesizer **600** also includes the untrimmed VCO **100** and the input voltage tuner **400** described above. The input voltage tuner **400** is summed into the input node of the VCO **100** to provide an offset voltage such that the phase detector **604** may operate in the center of its tuning range.

Once the synthesizer **600** is incorporated in a communication device, such as a cellular phone, it is calibrated by the tuner **400**, and the tuned control voltage **108** is then held constant by the phase-locking function of the PLL. Further, a tuner output control voltage **412** may also be applied elsewhere in the VCO circuit to achieve the nominally specified frequency through "pushing" or "pulling" as described above.

A communication device, which includes a frequency oscillator and a frequency synthesizer, can be a transmitter, transceiver, or a receiver. In one embodiment, shown in a block diagram in FIG. 7, a communication receiver comprises a pre-filter **700** and an RF amplifier **702** which provides an output to an associated radio circuitry **704**. The pre-filter **700** and the RF amplifier **702** select a band of RF signals received via an antenna **710**. The RF amplifier **702** is broadly tuned to select several channels or stations from the spectrum of signals impinging on the antenna **710**.

An intermediate frequency (IF) amplifier **712** in the radio circuitry **704** is a highly selective amplifier with a passband perfectly matched to the bandwidth of a single station and a center frequency at some fixed intermediate frequency. An

"intermediate" frequency is a frequency below the RF frequencies coming in on the antenna **710** and above the audio frequencies that constitute the modulation.

The frequency synthesizer **600** includes the tuned VCO. It is tuned to supply a sinusoidal signal, F_{OUT} , at a frequency located above the RF frequencies by an amount equal to the intermediate frequency selected by the IF amplifier **712**. A mixer **706** forms the product of the incoming RF signal with the sinusoidal signal from the frequency synthesizer **600**, and produces both sum and difference frequencies. Whenever the synthesizer **600** is adjusted so that the difference frequencies from a particular station fall within the passband of the IF amplifier **712**, the IF amplifier **712** will amplify that particular set of carrier-plus-sidebands while rejecting other nearby spectra. The processor/controller **410** performs synthesizer **600** tuning.

A peak detector **714** demodulates the down-converted signal, and an audio amplifier **716** amplifies the demodulated audio-frequency signal. The audio signal is then sent to a speaker **718**.

In another embodiment, the communication device is a transceiver such as in a cellular phone. The synthesizer provides a transmitter local oscillator signal controlled by the VCO. The transmitter and receiver are switchably connected to the antenna under control of the processor/controller **410**.

FIG. 8 shows an exploded view of a cellular telephone system **800** using the VCO controlled frequency synthesizer **600** described above. The cellular telephone system **800** also includes a key pad **802** and various other buttons and indicators **804**. The telephone system **800** also includes a speaker **806**, a microphone **808**, an antenna **810**, and other communication electronics **812** contained within a telephone housing **814**. A display unit **816** is used in conjunction with the keypad **802** to facilitate user inputs. The communication electronics **812** may include, among others, devices such as the frequency synthesizer **818**, the TCXO **820**, and the RF amplifier **822**.

FIG. 9 shows a paging device **900** including the VCO controlled frequency synthesizer **600**. The paging device **900** also includes communication electronics similar to those in the cellular telephone system **800**.

Advantages of replacing the VCO tuning process at the manufacturing stage with an adjustment of a resonant circuit in the VCO during an operation of the oscillator include a lower cost of VCO as well as a low cost implementation of the tuner using existing components and shared memory spaces.

Other embodiments are within the scope of the following claims. For example, the frequency oscillator described above can be used in other wireless and cellular systems.

What is claimed is:

1. An input voltage tuner for a frequency oscillator, comprising:

a first circuit configured to receive an input tuning signal for the oscillator;

a look-up table which provides a correction value corresponding to said input tuning signal;

a processor operating to control the look-up table during operation of the oscillator, such that the oscillator operates at a nominally specified output frequency;

a second circuit configured to convert said correction value into a form operable by a variable transistor output load; and

5

said variable transistor output load, coupled to a collector of a first transistor, configured to receive the converted correction value from the second circuit and provide frequency pulling where the particular frequency is fine tuned to the nominally specified output frequency of the oscillator. 5

6

2. The tuner of claim 1, wherein said first and second circuits are an analog to digital converter and a digital to analog converter, respectively.

* * * * *